

Soldiers greeted by wave of joy

37th TRANSCOM back from Kuwait deployment

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Goose bumps and chills in humid, 90-plus degree heat?

Far from impossible it seemed to be a common affliction last Friday at the Kleber Gymnasium when the arrival of the busses carrying 37th Transportation Command Soldiers was announced shortly before 8 a.m.

There were 81 Soldiers and two Department of the Army civilians from the 37th TRANSCOM returning from a yearlong deployment to Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. And, there were approximately 200 family members and friends, who expressed their joy at the announcement with an explosion of relief and appreciative noise - heartfelt and thunderous applause, whistling and foot-stomping. Amid the noise and flag-waving, the first tears were visible even on faces glowing with wide, joyous and anticipatory smiles.

Finally, the Soldiers and the two civilians marched into the gymnasium and lined up in formation. That's when the tide of joy became so intense, it seemed one should be able to touch it. Emotional goose bumps and chills, despite the heat and humidity.

That was the moment every spouse, child and friend present had been waiting for since last July.

"My dad was here for my sixth birthday. But, he has been gone a long, long time, and we haven't been able to do all the things we used to do, when I was five, or four, or three, or two, or one, for a very long time," said Connor West, who was waiting for Capt. Ted West, the 37th Trans Group company commander.

The separation has also been difficult for 8-year-old Sean Benoit, whose father, Lt. Col. Christopher Benoit, the



Photo by ANGELIKA LANTZ

The excitement reaches its high point as the 37th TRANSCOM Soldiers enter the Kleber Gymnasium upon their return from a yearlong deployment in Kuwait.

S-3 Officer, was deployed right after the family arrived in Germany.

"My dad plays baseball with me and I really missed him and playing with him. But now he is back, and on Aug. 4 we are going back to the States to see all my family," Sean said.

Briana Adkins, 15, and Coreen Murray, 16, said they were really concerned about their fathers being downrange and thrilled about having them back. Neither girl got much sleep the night before, because both families were so excited about the imminent returns.

"My dad [Sgt. Maj. Gilbert Adkins] and I used to stay up together all night and watch scary movies, my mom doesn't do that," Briana said. "My dad

[Master Sgt. Courtney Murray] and I used to hang out a lot, we missed a lot of time together," Coreen agreed.

While downrange the 37th TRANSCOM provided command and control for three transportation battalions, one infantry battalion, 24 companies and 3000 Soldiers.

They manned and sustained seven separate operating sites in Iraq and Kuwait and were required to relocate their group headquarters and ALOC twice.

Nonetheless, they provided operational oversight for more than 10,000 transportation missions and more than 42 million miles in the deployment and redeployment of 33 Brigade Combat Teams.